

THE RHYMES OF A RAILROAD MAN

by
DEVON G. HOUGH

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Rhymes of A Railroad Man

BY

DEVON G. HOUGH

Edited and Arranged

by

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may 25, 1949 gift of Dr. Mowbray

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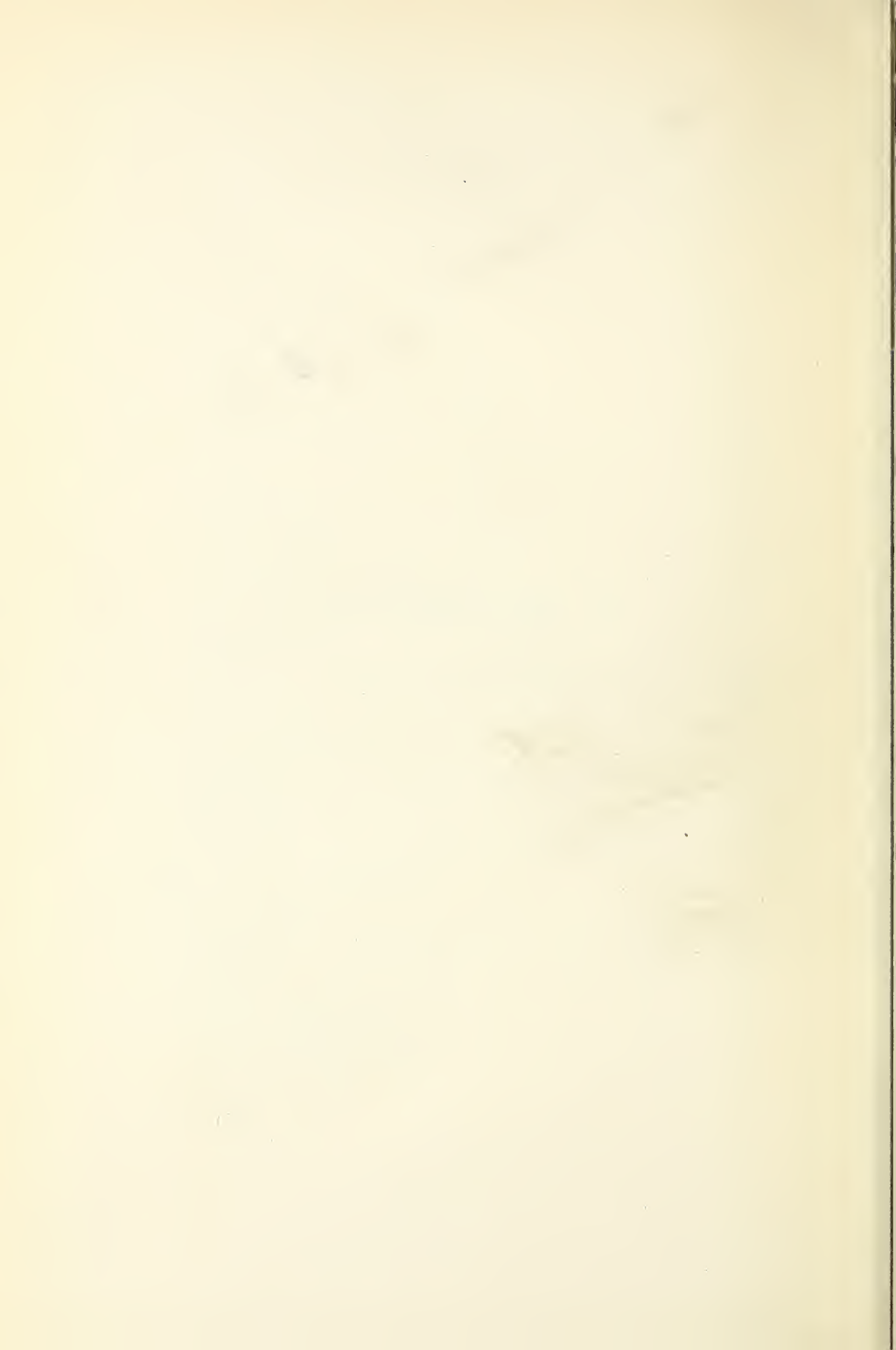
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I. THE HIGH RAIL



THE FLAMING FLICKER

All the brains got in a huddle,
And the reason for their muddle
Was the schedules of the planes.
For their time was getting faster,
And the rails saw sheer disaster
With their slow and pokey trains.

From Miami to Manhattan,
Just five hours, smooth as satin,
With a luncheon in the blue;
While the rails took twenty hours
By combining all their powers;
It's the best that they could do.

So they called in all designers
Of the ultra-new streamliners,
To confer and rack their brain,
To surpass air transportation,
And afford a racing nation
With the newest, fastest train.

So with much deliberation
They brought forth a new creation,
Built for speed in all details.
On each wheel were cups for suction
To prevent its own destruction
On the curves, to hold the rails.

Date of trial run elected,
Herman Alston was selected;
Their most trusted engineer.
To forestall the chance of hitches,
All the foremen spiked the switches;
Every train was in the clear.

And as Herman left Penn Station
With this gem of transportation,
On his epic run down South,
He left a crowd a-cheering,
Yet foreboding and a-fearing,
With their hearts up in their mouth.

Then the radar boys got busy,
And the weather-men were dizzy
As reports came rushing through.
Reported cyclone south of Philly,
Washington had grown quite chilly,
With tornadoes at Richmond too.

Raleigh reported a roaring,
At Columbia, floats went soaring,
Fairfax was cloudy and dark.
Savannah had halted the fishing,
Jacksonville heard a loud swishing;
Depot blown over at Starke.

At Sebring sparks were soon flying,
At Delray they heard a shrill crying,
And Miami was put on alert.
Then Herman came in a-dashing,
With broad-brimmed smile a-flashing,
And glad nobody got hurt.

How long it took him to make it?
I hope my friend you can take it;
It took him just four hours flat.
Pilots have simply gone crazy,
Railroad men are still hazy,
Seeing a record like that.

On the Flicker, capsule gliders
Are provided for all riders,
To detrain at points between;
So a passenger for Raleigh
Leaves in capsule, shot by golly,
From the train at Aberdeen.

Since the Flicker never is halted,
Entrañees are catapulted
To the observation car,
Where receptionesses greet them
And so comfortably seat them,
Near the diner or the bar.

Now each seat has television,
Built with accurate precision;
Made to grant your every wish.
You can chat with Netty Grable,
You can have a private table,
And enjoy your favorite dish.

So, for service to the letter,
Super fine and even better,
And schedules which are quicker,
I can recommend no finer
Than this new deluxe stream-liner,
The Seaboard's Flaming Flicker.

WHAT DID NELLIE THINK?

Fresh from school came little Nellie,
All primed and set for work,
So she made out application
As a railroad student clerk.

She was set to work at Yoeman,
Relief, to catch vacations;
She couldn't learn or figure out
These railroad conversations.

"Nearly hit a gandy-dancer
As I wheeled 'em south of Lutz,
He and all his burr-head babies
Were a-shaking in their boots.

Had to put her in the big hole;
Laid the brains out on the floor,
But I saved the roadway's buggy;
G— d—, it made me sore."

Then a brakeman made palaver,
"Had a session on the mat;
Think the boss used all his reamers,
For it's bigger than my hat."

Then a hog-head told carpecker,
"Stick a blue flag on that rip
Or I'll tear up all your screw-jacks,
When I set off there next trip."

So poor Nellie blushed and wondered,
At this railroad bull and talk;
That's why she said, "Oh, thank you,
But I much prefer to walk."

SERVICE

She was a railroad ticket clerk
On Florida's western coast,
Her brain was made of single track,
Not much of that to boast.

Her hair drooped down across one eye,
The other one was glaring,
She flung her fanny everywhere,
Apparently not caring.

A customer to window came
And looked his consternation,
When he was shot the line of stuff
In this, the conversation:

"All seats we have are R. P. A.
No space for ninety days.
Why don't you travel by the bus
Or East and West Airways?"

"And is your trip an urgent one?
Don't you know a war is on?
No, I don't care what you will do;
I'll be here when you are gone.

"Oh, you're going to get married?
How cute! Ain't that just too nice?
Now where was it you want to go?
Yes, I know, you told me twice.

"A soldier has a seat reserved,
The limit's up tomorrow;
He's at the Red Cross Building now
To see what he can borrow.

"So I will let you have his seat,
I'm sure he doesn't care to go,
For he was home before the war,
He won't miss his first furlough.

"Now let me see; what is the fare?
It's not here, not in this book,
And Jim is busy now, oh dear.
Guess I'll have to take a look.

"Now going out the Pittsburgh way
I'd use the Flaming Flicker;
It goes around by Hell Gate Bridge,
But gets you there much quicker.

"Oh, dear me. Now where is my key
To that naughty ticket case;
I must have left it in the lounge
When I prettied up my face.

"What's that you say? Well, so it is.
DUMB! I left it in the lock.
Did you attend the dance last night?
Solid music. Like a rock.

"Now how much tax is it I charge;
Is it five or ten per cent?
I simply lose most everything,
Wonder where that table went.

"Oh, there it is. Who put it there?
Wonder that it wasn't burned.
Waste paper basket for a file!
It was here when I returned.

"Now there's your ticket, lucky man.
No! No tips for me from men.
But I could use a quart of Scotch,
One of Bourbon, one of gin."

She didn't know, but darn soon learned
That customer was President;
She might have gone by Hell Gate Bridge
But this alone I KNOW, she went.

WASTED STEAM

I knew a railroad engineer
Who abhorred a whistle's scream,
He refused to blow a signal,
But conserved each pound of steam.

He gave logic for his reason;
"Well, this is how I feel,
Steam that's used to blow a whistle
Can't be used to turn a wheel."

In this war-torn world of ours,
We could do so much to heal,
If the steam lost in palaver
Could be used to turn a wheel.

YOUR BOYS

We're the boys who pound the brass
And in return get pounded;
We just report on trains which pass
And see the wires not grounded.
We're not supposed to be too bright
And know so very much,
Just keep the rates and tariffs right
Express and mail and such.
Be diplomats when patrons rave,
Be patient when they swear,
And when they call you "dirty knave"
Pretend you didn't hear.
Know if they change in Buffalo
And how to file a claim,
Say you're just fine when you are low
And hope they are the same.
Know PPO's, corrections too
And just what offsets what,
The recipe for Brunswick stew,
Why the temperature is hot.
The Commission's latest ruling,
And how all rates are made,
Know when the Boss is fooling,
Who heads the Ladies' Aid.

Know where the fish are biting,
What's good for baby's colds,
Keep an office so inviting,
How much a bunker holds,
The Florida Law on citrus,
How many cars next year,
The damage by the cold to us,
Just when the market's fair.
Embargo this, embargo that,
It's subject to delay.
Your requisition seems too fat.
Why decrease is shown in May?
The Chief is hot and raising hell,
For you delayed that train;
The Superintendent says "——" Oh well,
We aren't supposed to have a brain.

RAILROADING

I'm often asked what is the charm
A railroad has for those
Who once have worked and cursed it so,
Yet love it. No one knows.

The things I see and hear and feel,
Causing my sensation,
May bring to others no response,
No reverberation.

To answer questions you have asked,
We'll need some transportation;
So come with me and we will use
For such, imagination.

We are now in Chicago Yards,
The largest; unsurpassed.
A multitude of engines move
Some slowly crawl, some fast .

Yet every moving train you see
Has purpose in each motion,
A part of that gigantic plan,
Giving locomotion.

To round house now, the resting place
Of Mallet, Mike and Mogul;
They pulse and throb and steam as though
Impatient with such lull.

Though monstrous mass of steel they be,
Their power gives the nation
The thing that fuses all our states,
Efficient transportation.

Now let's ride on fast streamliner,
Noting just what thought and care
Was given to produce such art,
So fast, safe, and yet so fair.

Perpetual changes made, and yet
Eternally progressing
With single thought, To Serve, from which
There will be no digressing.

Call it system, power, progress,
Service or what you will,
Yet when I hear a whistle scream
I get a tingling thrill.

DO

We can study regulations,
Memorize them through and through,
Yet there is no claim prevention
Till applied to what we do.

At the meetings, we can listen
To the speaker's cry and hue,
But we'll never make reductions
By just knowing what to do.

Now, by making combination
Of the things we know and do,
We can make a claim reduction,
Cutting payments half in two.

So let's make a resolution
That we'll start each day anew,
By applying, to our utmost,
What we know, to what we do.

(The Right Way, June 1947;
Seaboard Railroad North Florida
Division, 4/16/47)

BROTHER, IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU

William grabbed an engine
Which was traveling too fast;
The engine is undamaged,
But Bill is in a cast.

Joseph kicked a draw-head,
Not thinking very much;
The box car made the coupling,
And Joseph made a crutch.

Mack forgot to cut the air
Before he broke the hose.
Now he has soup for every meal,
And plastic for a nose.

Frank never seemed to worry
What he handled live wire with;
Now Frank is just a cinder;
His wife is Widow Smith.

THIS TOO CAN HAPPEN TO YOU

Jack wouldn't blow his whistle,
And he wouldn't ring his bell,
He hit a semi-trailer,
Where he went, I'll never tell.

Paul's hand was on the throttle,
And his eye was on a frail,
So he didn't see the monkey;
Now his train is off the rail.

Phil used a mushroomed chisel,
With his goggles on the shelf;
His wife now reads him funnies,
He can't read them himself.

Moe was always flagging short;
He knew, but was too lazy.
Second nine plowed through ten cars . . .
Moe's pushing up a daisy.

(Seaboard Railroad, March 1948;
National Safety Council,
Safe Railroader, June 1948)

II. IN THE SMOKER



UNCLE MOSE SAYS "FAREWELL"

Once yars ago, in Bethel Church,
Us 'cide to change our pastor,
An' git a young un what could step
An' git 'round whole lot faster.

Brudder Jones an' me was 'pinted
To 'form de parson uv it.
He say dat he will leave as axed,
But cain't say dat he luv it.

He say dat one mo' time he preach,
Fo' to tell us all farewell,
An' give a final wa'nin' cry
Us *all* done boun' fo' Hell.

Come dat day, us all is 'cited
To see what he preach about,
Us all so quiet, de only soun'
Is de sweat a poppin' out.

"Brudders an' susters, heah Ah stan's
A tard an' age-ole nigger,
Yo' wants a change, dat's what yo' gits,
Fo' why, I jus' cain't figger.

"Now who was it, who jined yo' all
In marriage, solemnized?
Who chris'en all yo' chillen too?
Yo' dead, who funeralized?

"Now yo' wants a diff'rent pastor,
So I hopes yo' gits de best,
But I'se askin' one las' favo',
Dis am my las' request.

"Will de brudders an' de susters
Move 'cross to sep'rit sides,
So yo'all will be sep'rated,
Stid as yo' now resides.

"Now dat you' all is sittin' right,
Jis' set dere fo' a while,
Til I has very slowly marched
Completely down de aisle,

"An' as I pass, I wants yo' all
To careful note, don't fail,
Observe dat sprig o' mizzletoe
Dat's tied to my coat tail."

BEWARE!

I like my desk
With papers thrown asunder,
So I can hunt and plunder,
And dig about down under
The whole darn mess.

Just leave my desk—
Don't you dare attempt to clean it;
It matters not who's seen it;
Leave it alone; I mean it;
No foolishness!

(Tampa Tribune, 10/20/47)

UNSEEN, UNHEARD OF

I never thought I'd live to see
A dog of mine pass by a tree,
Without a pause;
Or walk around an alley-cat
Who grinned expectantly and sat
With unsheathed claws.

Or didn't love a fluffy rug,
Where he could loll and scratch a bug;
Or get upset
At unheard noises in the dark,
And tear the curtains down and bark—
I haven't yet.

(Tampa Tribune, 10/20/47)

DOG . . . GONE!

(He said:)

"Once I knew a pointer dog,
Who'd sit up on his flanks
And beg a dime for dog-food,
Then lustily give thanks.

"To the grocery he would amble,
Spit his dime on the floor,
Pick up a can of dog-food,
One can, no less, no more."

(I said:)

"Since living costs have risen,
Now you may think this strange,—
I give my dog a quarter, and
He brings me back the change."

ROMANCE AND RHEUMATISM

Poets make me sick
With their "precious little girlie,"
"Ah, her hair, so sweet and curly;"
"With passion pools for eyes."

Straight as a stick;
That's the way I like their hair,
With a figure firm and square,
And a recipe for pies.

No bill and coo,
No moon-lit night romancing,
No three o'clock out dancing;
Pitching woo out in the cold.

I'm telling you,
I like my women cozy;
But since you are so nosey,
Perhaps I am too old.

TERRIFIC

I make small claim
To place with champions of our nation;
On Broadway, I'll never cause sensation;
Perhaps I'm just a bore.

I have no fame,—
In one art only do I surpass,
But that I do with style and class,
Gracious me! How I can snore.

HAUGHTY?

I travel pathways straight ahead,
I look not left nor right,
And naught above or naught below
Will come within my sight.

Perchance I pass a mountain range,
Perhaps a rugged cliff,
But only see what's straight ahead;
Ye Gods, my neck is stiff!

(Tampa Tribune, 9/6/47)

AILING

My temples pound with each heart beat,
My head aches front and rear,
As Voo-Doo boys from Africa
Were drumming in my ear.

A shooting pain in my mid-riff
Runs up and down the spine,
And though pneumonia has set in,
My appetite is fine.

I'M ASKING YOU

No, I won't agree that females
Are like cats;
Now take rats,—
You know a tom-cat never fails
To grab the rodents by their tails;
What would women do?
I'm asking you.

Suppose I rub a strange cat's tail,
Stroke her fur,
She will purr;
Right up into my lap she'll sail,
She will not quibble, will not fail;
What would women do?
I'm asking you.

And when I start to go to bed,
Puss goes out,
Roams about,
And why not, for she's been fed?
That brings back just what I said;
What would women do?
I'm asking you.

NO CURIOSITY

In most churches, as you enter,
Folks will turn around and stare;
Not so in my church, we never
Give impression that we care.

Should a member show bad manners,
We would simply be appalled;
So we just bought rear-view mirrors;
Now each seat has one installed.

(Tampa Tribune, 8/24/47)

PANTS, HOLD FAST

All the fellows want my Honey,
'Cause her Mama has the money
And the gal has sex appeal.
She tells them I'm her bunny,
And her Mama thinks I'm funny;
That's exactly how I feel.

For my suit is getting thinner
Every time I go to dinner,
And my gal does love to dance.
She's a dancing little sinner,
But her heart would break within her
If she saw my fearful glance.

I must hasten to the altar,
Get her fastened to my halter,
With her check-book too, perchance;
For there mustn't be a falter,
For a qualm would soon assault her
If I split my only pants.

PARADOX

The night, though consistently falling,
Has no record of breaking at all,
But the day, which forever is breaking,
Has never as yet had a fall.

RESPITE

Bills, bills, bills!
Everybody wants my money,
But what makes it all so funny,
Is, I'm broker than a "hant."

Bills, bills, bills!
They all think I'm full of shekels
As a country boy with freckles,
And can pay them when I can't.

Bills, bills, bills!
If they knew of my condition,
I would lack the inhibition
Then to hold the pack at bay.

Bills, bills, bills
But as long as I don't mention,
All I have is good intention,
I'll be safe for one more day.

(Tampa Tribune, 7/27/47)

THAT'S TELLING HIM, SISTER

As the caw of crow sounds harshly
Mid the mellow lilt of lark,
As the constant drip of faucet
Brings a discord to the dark;
So you sound to me.

As red figures look on statement
Coming to me from the bank,
As horse I wagered to win on
Looks after breaking his shank;
So you look to me.

As a naught without the circle,
As a hole without the dirt,
As a mole-hill to a mountain,
Or as Sally with a skirt;
So you are to me.

DISGUSTED

I'm disgusted

With the things which come my way,
 (past-due bills)
With the same old food each day
 (grits and collard-greens)
And with hoping for the best.
 (chitterlings and ice-cream)

I mistrusted

All the morals which I learned
 (rolling bones gather moss)
When they failed to be concerned
 (no moss)
With the problems on my chest.
 (still no moss)

Mind is rusted

With the thoughts that I must think
 (crapped out on an eight)
Of the poverty and stink
 (broke again)
And the bleakness all around.
 (ten days yet until pay-day)

Pathway dusted

With the ashes of desires,
 (hoped for naturals)
Aims and hopes and youthful fires
 (with no snake eyes or four rows)
Burned and scattered on the found.
 (yeah, man! they took me to the cleaners)
 (Tampa Tribune, 8/2/47)

BURPS

Burps are made in many sizes,
Each equipped with sound effect;
They are common to all ages,
Quite alike in that respect.

Little baby fills his "tummy,"
And in pain he yells his grief,
'Til he's held across Mom's shoulder,
Where a burp brings him relief.

Teen-agers drink up soda pop
To vie for the loudest burp,
And the loser of the contest
Is then dubbed a little twerp.

Then comes old alcoholic,
With a burp both deep and vile;
Just a sippin' on a foamy
And a burpin' all the while.

Now when Gramp forgets his diet
And he suffers from heart-burn,
He will go for dose of soda,
And a-burping will return.

Let us not forget the ladies,
With a burp, like dainty sneeze;
With their lacy little hankie
And their "Do excuse it, please."

Though a burp is very common
And is heard in every town,
All the greater burps in burping
Come from beans cooked upside down.

HOW TRUE

I strolled into a ten-cent store
To look around, nothing more,
And clerks like bees from door to door
Nearly crushed me to the floor.
"Can I help you please?" they said.

Again I went, this time to buy
Cotton socks and one necktie;
I looked all over, low and high,
Ere I found one glaring eye.
"Won't you help me, please?" I pled.

I LOVE THAT GAL

Like a pole cat in the hollow
She stands out all alone,
She's the sweetheart of the back lands,
A violet by a stone.

Her eyes are close together,
And her ears are far apart,
But beneath that buxom bosom
Beats a kind and lovin' heart.

She's my bell-bottomed Bessie,
Like a round-house at the shops,
But she does the cutest rumba,
She's the queen of all the hops.

And when my Bessie cuts a rug,
She knocks her knees—Oh, brother!
Solid rhythm, she makes with 'em,
They smite against each other.

Her hair is like the wind-blown grass,
It lies in each direction;
Its fragrance chokes the very air,
Like a nigger at election.

She's my corn-crushin' cracker gal,
And always on the beam,
With a voice of booming thunder;
A gal out of a dream.

She's a two-quid gal worth mention,
The gal we all adore,
At paces nine, I don't know when
She's missed the cuspidor.

Since dresses now have grown so short,
My Bessie's most appealing;
I so adore to watch her sit,
'Tis then she's most revealing.

She's my two-ton triffin' heart throb,
So wild, so warm and free,
But should she sit upon my lap,
Mohammed! Peace on me!

ENTITLED ME

I sometimes think of what is said
When sons to men are born,
And wonder why the words are changed,
To fit the title worn.

"Your Majesty, we have a Prince;"
"My Lord, another Peer;"
And yet, when Doc saw me, he said,
"My God! What have we here?"

COCK-EYED

Three cross-eyed criminals were brought
Before a cross-eyed judge;
He knew by glancing at their mugs
Their records bore a smudge.

He asked the first one for his name;
The second answered, "Hugh."
The Judge then glared at him and said,
"I did not speak to you!"

The third man thought that it was he,
This anger had incurred,
Said, "Pardon me, your Honor, Judge,
I never said a word."

SILENCE

He's a friend, a pal, a partner;
I like him fine.
For he keeps his own opinions
And I keep mine.

We never argue politics,
Nor gossip much,
We never talk about the heat
Or cold, and such.

We have never told each other
One single lie;
For he is deaf and dumb, you see,
And so am I.

FRACTIONAL RETURN

I stumbled home the other night,
Just about three-quarters tight,
And eventually found the door.
All was quiet within the house,
Except the snoring of the spouse,
Which shook the building to the floor.

I carefully removed my shoes,
Not caring to disturb her snooze,
And tip-toed just inside.
There I found, just a second late,
My boy had left a roller skate,
Which took his pappy for a ride.

An impending crash was certain,
So I grabbed a window curtain,
In attempt to check my fall,
But instead of much resistance,
I believe it lent assistance
To my speeding down the hall.

Onward, faster I went sailing,
Both my arms and legs a-flailing,
Upsetting vases here and there.
With each crash I shook and trembled,
Thinking how my dash resembled
That midnight ride of Paul Revere.

Pots aluminum, and enameled,
Fell about me as I scrambled,
'Till my nerves were all on edge;
As I lay there filled with sorrow,
I resolved that come tomorrow,
I would sign that temperance pledge.

IT'S THE FEED, NOT THE BREED

Most absent-mindedly I fed
My goat some rabbit-chow;
I gave the dog some laying mash
And scratch feed to the cow.

The chicken ate the orange pulp,
My tom-cat ate the shorts;
The goat now wrinkles up his nose;
The chicken moos and snorts.

The dogs all crow and cackle,
And the cat sits up and begs,
So, soon I'll have my fortune made,
When the cow start laying eggs.

ABOUT BEES AND GUM BEATING

The bee in *debt* is absent,
When pronounced
But the sting is ever present,
Most pronounced.

Repetition in conversation,
In more than one respect,
Is like a lump of salt twice used—
Without flavor or effect.

HONEY AND A FLY

Diplomatic words and care
Can get a guy 'most anywhere;
No need to be uncouth.
If one in pants told one in frock,
Her homely face would stop a clock—
Though perhaps it was the truth—

He diplomatically could say
The same, but in a different way,
And give the gal a thrill,
By saying every time he gazed
On her expectant face upraised,
That Father Time stood still.

POLITICS

A lot of mud, a crowded hall,
And promises enough for all,
Oil for slickers, beer for hicks,
And that, my friend, is politics.

REMINISCING

I barely can recall those days
When salaries were ample
To purchase those delicious foods;
Sliced bacon, for example.
My, oh my!

Chicken, oysters, shrimp and chops,
And sausage by the pail.
It must have been about that time
The new shirts lost their tail.
So did I.

Though my salary now is doubled,
I am forced to live in shacks,
And the BVDs I'm wearing,
Are from second-hand sacks
Of various brands,
And colored bands.

Now it's cornbread without gravy,
And soup without a bean,
Collard greens without the chitterlings,
And fat-back without lean.
Gracious me!

Yes, I prefer those good old days,
Those days of milk and honey—
I'll take the food and BVD's,
Instead of worthless money.
Yes, siree!

SPRING

New tendrils sprout, buds blossom out;
The sap begins to trickle;
And woe is me, rheumatic me,
Not worth a plugged-up nickel.

THWARTED

A hero, that's me
All set for decoration—
For without a hesitation
I dived into the drink.
When the youngster yelled out "Get me!"
That wasn't what upset me,
For there wasn't time to think.

It's like this, you see.
When I calmly made the rescue,
As they teach all Scouts to do,
And started to turn around,
My complexion turned quite sallow,
For the water was so shallow
That my feet dragged on the ground.

THINKING STINKING THOUGHTS

You stole my car and used my gas,
You thumb your nose each time I pass,
You know what I like to do?
I'm thinking stinking thoughts of you!

You took my gal to the wishing well,
And now she thinks that you are swell;
You make it rhyme, and go there too.
I'm thinking stinking thoughts of you.

You drink my likker for my own sake,
You pull my tooth for your toothache,
Now you can jump right in the lake,
I'm thinking stinking thoughts of you.

Each cone I get, you want to lick it,
When my horse wins, you steal my ticket,
Now, brother, you know where to stick it;
I'm thinking stinking thoughts of you!

WINTER CAMP

As I squat before the camp-fire,
And my front glows red as ember,
When my backside's frozen solid
As a dawn in mid-December,
I feel for knights of long ago,
Who squatted thus and suffered so,
With front of armor all aglow,
And their rear ends ten below;
How they stood it, I don't know.

WOULD SUSPENDERS HELP?

A question for discussion:
Have the dresses really changed?
Tell me, I'm tight-lipped.
With top and bottom lowered,
And differently arranged—
Have they just slipped?



III. FROM RED TO GREEN



BEACHCOMBER

Life and living, death and dying;
Mortal tides which ebb and flow,
Begin and end when tide is lowest,
Whether flood be high or low.

So in rising and in falling,
Measure not how high they reach,
But instead, upon their ebbing,
What they leave upon the beach.

(Florida Magazine of Verse, winter issue, 1948;
Dallas News, 3/8/48;
Jacksonville American, 2/27/48;
Ohio State Journal)

A DREAMER

I spend my life in dreaming
Of things unknown to me,
As beauty, peace and quiet,
Joy and security.

My dreams are mine, I make them;
My life, I only live;
It's yours, just for the asking,
My dreams I cannot give.

In dreams all things are joyful,
And gossip's tongue is mute;
In dreams, I play a carillon,
In life, I play a flute.

But if a flute I am to play,
I'll play the best I can,
In it I'll put both heart and soul
And play it like a man,

And when the Maestro points to me,
My little flute I'll raise
And give out music, sweet and good,
To please and not for praise.

(Florida Magazine of Verse, winter issue, 1948;
Jacksonville American, 2/27/48;
Polk County Democrat, 2/20/48)

THE APPROACH OF FEAR

Fear, at first, is a silent invader,
Quietly, gently, it knocks at the door;
Soft as a kitten on tip-toes
Stalking a string on the floor.

Should you but heed to its knocking,
More insistently knocking will come,
As the booming grows louder approaching
A drummer who booms on a drum.

At first you hear it, a boom, boom, boom;
Then it's BOOM, BOOM, BOOM on your ear,
Shoving out caution, reason, discretion;
And then you surrender! That's fear.

(Jacksonville American, 4/30/48)

SO LITTLE

God gave me much in my construction,
Yet asks so little from me:
A heart kept pure,
Faith to endure,
Love,
And humility.

DAY BY DAY

Many songs would be unwritten,
And many praises left unsung,
If we viewed the height of ladder,
Instead of space from rung to rung.

FREEDOM

Strange grasses grow upon my grave,
Untouched by loving hand,
And left alone to be reclaimed
By jungles in a foreign land.

Soon the spot will be concealed,
Again returned to dust and sod,
But soul long since has been returned
To Him who gave it first, our God.

Since the soul is in His keeping,
Resting safely in His hands,
Why be distressed and worried so
About my shell in foreign lands?

My freedom now is without bounds,
At will, I come and go,
I only gave a moulding shell
That all might have it so.

IT'S YOUR SHIP

Inconsequential is the size
Of the ship you sail at sea;
Important, though, your course be kept,
To windward or to lee.

Immaterial the cargo,
Heavy, bulky, light or frail,
If your ship is moving forward,
And you do not reef your sail.

Whether voyage be calm and sunny,
Or through storms which tear and rip,
Be the Captain of your vessel—
Be the Master of your ship.

SELFISHLY YOURS

I want to be good and pious-looking,
And discontinue midnight jooking,
And staggering home in the cold.
I want to sit in the foremost pew
And sing the hymns as good folks do;
But wait, until I grow old.

I want to pass through the Pearly Gate,
Not too soon, but not too late,
And walk on those Streets of Gold.
First let me squander all of my youth,
Then let me find the Way and the Truth—
When I am useless, helpless and old.

(Jacksonville American, 6/18/48)

UNSEEN

Judge not the heart and thoughts of one
With face wherein no beauty lies,
For other senses may be tuned
To beauty from within, unseen by eyes.

The rosy cheeks which glow today
Will yield to time, perhaps grow thin,
But years will mellow, magnetize,
Beauty which lives and grows within.

(Jacksonville American, 6/18/48)

MIND AND MATTER

"This is Friday!"
"So what?"
"It's hot."
"What's cooking?"
"I'm looking
For nothing eventful today."
(And nothing happened that day.)

"This is Friday!"
"Hot stuff?"
"Sho nuff!"
"I'm dancing,
I'm prancing,
I'm looking for big things today."
(And big things happened that day.)

UNANSWERABLE?

Who knows all the mysteries of the skies?
Or the bowels of the earth?
Who knows if pain at death is more
Or less than borne at birth?

Can man design one human part
Or make one flower grow?
Can he alone control the tide,
To check its ebb and flow?

Can man yet chart the action of
One colloid in the sod?
How little we poor mortals know,
How much we leave to God.

CONSOLATION

Pour on me your troubled waters,
Rest your weary head on me,
Come to me when broken-hearted
And in need of sympathy.

Let me share with you my plenty,
Let me carry part of load,
Under which you can but stagger
Down a rock-strewn, dusty road.

I am rich in understanding;
To me is known all sorrow;
For did not I traverse today
Your pathway of tomorrow?

(Tampa Tribune, 4/29/47)

FLOWERS' AND PEOPLE

There's a dahlia in my garden,
So radiant and fair,
But at night, with color absent,
I do not know it's there.

Yet beside it grows a jasmine,
Whose beauty won't compare,
But by day and night its presence
Gives fragrance to the air.

Which of these two lovely flowers
Would I judge for highest prize?
I would choose the constant giver,
Not the one to please my eyes.

So are people judged, as flowers,
In the daily lives they live,
Not as much for fine appearance
As for kindnesses they give.

CIVILIZATION

Civilized and diplomatic?
Not completely yet, I fear,
For so often I am tempted,
Want to spit right in your ear.

And sometimes, I say politely,
"Won't you come again? Do, please,"
When I'd like to kick your shin-bones
From your ankles to your knees.

And, as you sit there babbling on,
While I say, "You are such fun,"
Maybe I would like to grab you,
Pull each hair out, one by one.

Partly civilized but fearful,
That veneering isn't stout,
And I hope that you aren't with me
When within breaks through without.

ANALOGUE

Waves forever moving,
Running to and fro;
Restless and impatient
As they come and go.

Bringing naught with coming,
Taking naught away;
So like all men living;
So like night and day.

(Tampa Tribune, 7/18/47)

LITTLE THINGS

It takes so little
Sometimes to mean so much,
A word perhaps, when fitly spoken,
A tender glance, a friendly token,
Perhaps a loving touch.

It takes so little,
Yet eagerly we clutch
And hold so tightly to our breast;
More dearly treasured than the rest,
Small things which mean so much.

PAINTING DREAMS

I like to paint little visions,
For people who differ from me—
People with wills to accomplish
And realize visions I see.

I grant to myself neither pity,
Nor envy, nor hatred or greed,
For some are born to be dreamers,
Others, destined to succeed.

I will paint away on my pictures,
Enjoying them all as I toil,
So that doers of deeds may accomplish,
The dreams I've recorded in oil.

(Jacksonville American, 4/30/48)

POISE

I was awaked from troubled sleep
Of dreams most disconcerting;
My mood was mean and querulous,
And thoughts were controverting.

Through latent dream-thought came a song,
With gayness effervescing;
I could but wonder how bird sang
When all was so depressing,

For rain had fallen through the night,
And the leaden dawn was chill;
Though poorly housed, he shook himself,
Continuing joyous trill.

He, exposed to the elements,
And I, warmly housed and dry;
For shame on me to let a lark,
Show a greater poise than I.

(Tampa Tribune, 5/16/47)

MY PRAYER

God grant to me the power to see
My faults, both great and many,
Yet not distort or sell them short,
My virtues, be there any.

Attune my ear that I may hear
My hasty words ere spoken,
And grant the knack to hold them back,
And cast them from me, broken.

Make of my heart, in every part,
A place for understanding,
Where grows no weed from bitter seed
Of hate or greed there landing.

Help me to share, be on the square;
A comfort to those bereaved,
But greater yet, may I forget
All injustices received.

THE OTHER SIDE

I want to be free,
Without a wall's protection,
Far out in a desert section,
With a roof of winking stars
And the cool clean sand below.

I want to be free
Of unjust obligations,
Of trials and tribulations,
And my heart made free of scars;
Mind swept clean of what I know.

I want to be free
Of the friction all about,
Superstition, fear and doubt,
Of the gossip and the dirt,
And complaints on every side.

I want to be free
As a fleecy cloud to roam,
With the blue skies for my home,
Beyond the range of pain and hurt,
Beyond the reach of racing tide.

(Tampa Tribune, 7/31/47)

WAITING

The ruts, the ruts,
The same old ruts forever,
Day after day I grind away,
Afraid to break and sever.
Not lack of guts.

So, I complain.
I give vent to pent-up hate
By the cussing and the fussing;
Yet, I weakly hesitate
To break my chain.

I'm not a lamb
Submitting to a fleecing;
For underneath, my claws I sheathe,
'Til time for their releasing,
Then, Holy damn!

ME TOO?

"Do you know,"
He says to me,
"Why people act so hazy?
Is that so?"

"Oh yes, you see,
All other folks are crazy
But you and me, I fear;
And sometimes you are queer."

PATIENCE

Patience, man, have patience;
Turn aside and rest a while.
The road is long.
Your feet are lagging more each mile.
It can't be wrong,
Since you, I take it, are your master.
You journey far.
Further will you go and faster,
If you but rest a while.

(Tampa Tribune, 11/2/47)

TROUBLE

When man was born,
His part assigned was labor,
And God his only neighbor,
Gave peace as his requite.

Man grew forlorn,
Lonely and dissatisfied,
He killed and cheated and lied;
And God then taught him fright.

But man grew worse,
His sins began to double,
So God then gave him trouble,
One each for every wrong.

Such was Adam's curse,
From him to us descended,
From birth till life is ended;
Trouble, instead of song.

(Tampa Tribune, 11/29/47)

IV. HOME TERMINAL



ONE HAND

My Daddy came from Georgetown way
And talked their charming brogue;
Wore mustache long, with touch of wax,
Which then was quite the vogue.

So tall, so strong, with gentle eyes;
So dignified and straight;
Descended from a thousand kings,
A regal potentate.

Oh, how I loved to clamber up
And sit upon his knee,
To hear him tell of long ago,
Of rice and slavery.

When quite a lad I wondered much
At legends of his land,
And how I marveled at the things
They did with just one hand.

Why the Yankees came to Georgetown
And pillaged Southern lands?
Well, the answer was quite simple,
"We didn't use both hands."

Why wouldn't they use both their hands,
And put them on the run?
"We couldn't use them both, you see;
A julep was in one."

How wonderful, if questions now,
Which daily come to me,
Could be so simply answered as
Those asked from Daddy's knee.

ROCKING . . . ROCKING

In these days of rush and hurry,
Thoughts go back to horse and surrey,
And those pleasant days back there;
Grand-ma knitting on a stocking,
Grand-pa sitting and a-rocking;
Rocking that old rocking chair.

We had no clock to time our labor,
We had no phone to call a neighbor,
But food sufficient, and to spare;
Grand-ma smiling at her knitting,
Grand-pa whiling time a-sitting;
Rocking that old rocking chair.

We didn't know of mass production,
Of atom bombs and world destruction;
We didn't worry then, or care,
For our Grand-ma was a-clocking,
And our Grand-pa was a-rocking;
Rocking that old rocking chair.

When my nerves now get all jangled,
And my thoughts, like string, get tangled,
Even friends get in my hair;
Then my mind will turn to Grand-ma,
And the unconcern of Grand-pa;
Rocking that old rocking chair.

Though to Heaven they have beat me,
I am certain they will greet me,
When and if I get up there;
Grand-ma knitting on a stocking,
Grand-pa sitting and a-rocking;
Rocking that old rocking chair.

MOTHER

Songs are sung and verses written,
Gifts of love for her one day,
Then we feel our mission ended,
Duty done, and go away.

When her fleeting day is over
And we feel we've done our part,
I wonder if we've left her
With a gay or aching heart.

She'll be left to reminiscing
Of the days when we were young;
She'll be hearing feet which patter
And a babbling little tongue.

She'll be thinking of our troubles,
Of our laughter, light and gay,
Through tomorrow and forever,
Not for just this single day.

So the day's we've left behind us
Are the treasures in her heart,
And her future joys are measured,
By the love which we impart.

EVERY DAY IS FLAG DAY

Side by side, line after line,
Numerous little flags of white—
Soaked in borax, washed and rinsed,
Unfurled in the dawn's early light.

Before I finish with furling them up,
Today's unfurling begins—
Perhaps the stork and doctor were wise,
In forgetting my order for twins.

PAGING MORPHEUS

The order calls for attention,
At ten, at two, at five,
And so frequently in between.
Good gracious sakes alive!

Bleary-eyed, I stumble out,
Though I can barely creep;
I'm just a brand new papa now,
In need of one night's sleep.

FATHER AND SON

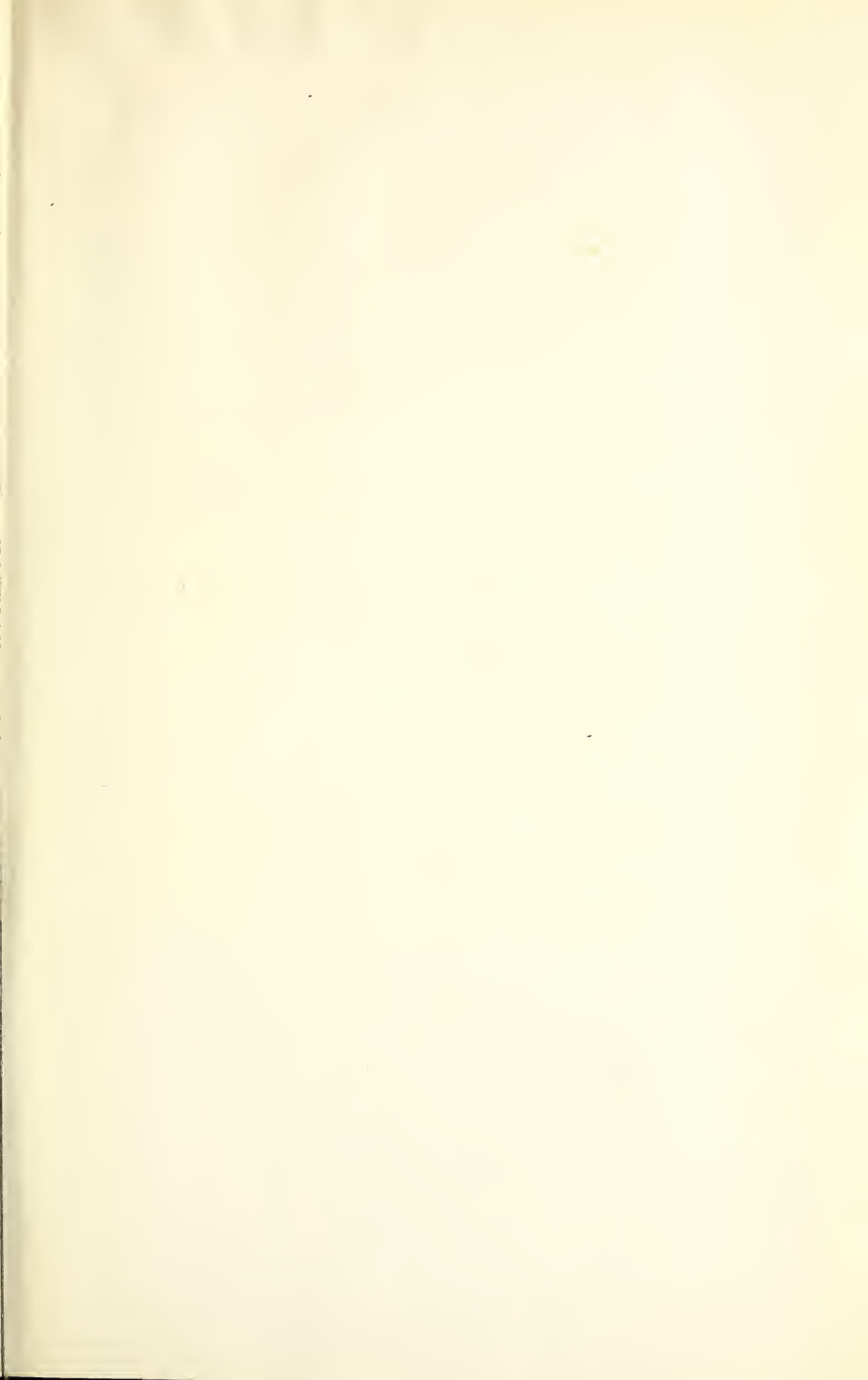
He was afraid—
So, he placed his tiny little hand in mine;
And his fear was gone.
I am afraid—
So, my Father in Heaven, I place my hand in thine,
And fearlessly go on.

MEET MY DAD

My little boys are growing up,
Normal, healthy, not too bad—
And confidentially I suspect,
No worse than Grandpa was, or Dad.

Though true at times they irritate me,
At times they make my heart feel glad,
When friends so proudly they introduce—
“I want you to meet and know my Dad.”

No epitaph could grace my tomb,
No greater homage could be had,
Than for my sons to say to friends—
“I wish that you had known my Dad.”



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